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**Monasticism and Civilization.** By Very Rev. John B. O'Connor, O.P., P.G., New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons. Pp. ix+253.

The recasting of civilization which has been taking place in the past decade has caused men to examine afresh the bases of much that has been long taken for granted. Among the habits of mind that had become, one might say, fixed, was that of disparaging the contribution of monasticism in the formation of our modern institutions. While this tendency has been accentuated by non-Catholic writers, who had a purpose in their denunciation of the monks, their very insistence and their show of learning has sometimes influenced Catholics to underestimate what we really do owe to this set of consecrated men. Father O'Connor has therefore put us in his debt by presenting in brief compass and in popular style an *apologia* which should give us a new outlook upon their lives and works.

He traces "Monasticism and Its Development" (Ch. I.), showing that its influence upon civilization, great as it has been, was "not the primary purpose for which [it] was instituted" (p. 2.) but was and "could not be otherwise than secondary and incidental to the sublime task of achieving the perfection of divine love which constituted the immediate and primary purpose of their religious existence." (*Ibid.*) Touching briefly upon the various monastic establishments prior to this time, we come to St. Benedict, the real founder of cenobitic monasticism in the West. It is to him that we owe practically all that we know of the institution; it is through the Benedictines that nearly all the monastic achievements which we so admire, have come, and so this volume often seems almost like a Benedictine chronicle, though the works of others, Carthusians, Cistercians, and the monks of the older Irish and Welsh foundations are not omitted. "In the present account. . . the writer has confined himself to the exact meaning of the word 'monk'. For this reason he has excluded from his pages the splendid contributions to the work of civilization of Franciscans, Carmelites, Augustinians, Dominicans, and the other great families of friars produced by the Middle Ages." (p. viii)

Treating "Monasticism and Agriculture" (Ch. III.) we are shown the monks at work in the forests and morasses of Europe,

carrying on their works with a scientific accuracy that would do credit to a far more learned age, and converting the moors and fens from pestilential holes into garden spots, from which we too often "today gather the fruits of their labors without a thought for them, or a prayer." (p. 56.)

Perhaps more interesting for moderns is the fact that "absolute social equality" (p. 71) and "the great principle of Christian democracy" (p. 72.) are monastic in origin. Thus the influence of the monks upon present day life is seen to be vast and far-reaching. So too, the contribution of the monasteries to education is incalculable. Monastic schools were for a long time practically the only ones, and the labours of the monks in preserving the learning of the ancients is immeasurable. "Practically all the literature of the first half of the Middle Ages, from the sixth to the eleventh century, was produced by the monks," (p. 133), and more than that, to them "is due, humanly speaking, the preservation of the Bible." (p. 115).

The author effectively disposes of the calumny that ignorant monastic copyists were principally responsible for the loss of priceless documents through the practice of erasing valuable material to obtain parchments on which to inscribe pious homilies and legends. In like manner he points out that not until the destruction of the monasteries was there any need for what we know as "charity" for the monks had administered relief in such a way that in "England prior to the Reformation there was no need of poor laws." (p. 166).

The latter part of this little volume is taken up with a discussion of the work of the monks in evangelisation, which was after all their great external work, at least from their own point of view, and "the material benefits conferred on humanity" (p. 178) were considered as mere "by-products." For seven centuries the Benedictines exercised a practically "undisputed apostolate" (p. 182) and the conversion of Euorpe was the result. Brief sketches of the work of the monks in the evangelisation of England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, France and a section devoted to their labours in other countries conclude the work. It is a little hard to find out what the author is trying to tell us when he makes the statement that St. Patrick, "died March 17, 465" (p. 201) and then further on informs us that he

"was occupied from 433 to 493—a period of sixty years—in the conversion of Ireland, dying at the age of one hundred and twenty years," (p. 203) while he has already told us that he was "born in 354 in France" (p. 199). Leaving out of the question disputed points these dates are evidence of a slip somewhere. The book is too good, too sound, too entirely praiseworthy, to be marred by this inconsistency. It is to be hoped that it will be corrected.

The usefulness of this work is not confined to those who are of the household of Faith, but it can easily be placed in the hands of non-Catholics as well. The fact that in the bibliography fourteen (possibly fifteen) of the thirty-four works cited are by non-Catholics will serve to enhance the impression of un-biassed treatment.

We may well agree with the author's own feeling of thankfulness that "the spirit of St. Benedict still lives" (p. 235) and "that the mighty engine of religion by which these marvelous things were done is still laboring with the same silent efficiency" (p. 234) as of yore.

FLOYD KEELER.

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**Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774-1776.** Edited by Evangeline Walker Andrews in Collaboration with Charles McLean Andrews, Professor of American History in Yale University. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921. Pp. 341.

This Journal, Egerton Ms. 2423 of the British Museum, comprises the familiar letters of a lady of quality to immediate friends in Scotland during her journey to the West Indies and Carolina and her return by way of Lisbon, Portugal. From two recently discovered copies of the manuscript, it has been learned that the lady was a certain Janet Schaw of Edinburgh who with her brother, friends, maid servant, and East Indian man servant sailed from the Firth of Forth to visit a brother long absent on his plantation near Wilmington, North Carolina. It is a fascinating story for the lady was a close observer of Catholic interests, of aristocratic leanings, of a hardy Presbyterian pre-